

Consumer Affairs

Mission: Consumer Affairs serves the public by assuring consumers are treated fairly and regulated companies are in compliance with commission laws, rules and policies.

GMAP Briefing

March 17, 2006

Dave Pratt

Overview of Presentation

- Consumer Affairs Activities
- Facts about Key Activities
 - Inquiries and Complaints
 - Education and Outreach
 - Public Involvement
 - Policy Work
 - Agency Coordination
- Complaint Volume and FTE Usage
- Consumer Affairs Measures
 - Number of complaints and number of violations
 - Customer satisfaction survey
 - Overall customer satisfaction
 - Customer satisfaction/Avg days to close
 - Average days to close complaints
 - Amount of \$\$ saved for consumers
 - Human resource management



Consumer Affairs Activities

- Helping consumers understand their rights and responsibilities and make informed choices.
- Working with consumers to resolve complaints involving regulated companies.
- Helping consumers understand and comment on matters before the Commission.
- Providing advice, information and guidance to regulated companies.
- Ensuring compliance with laws, rules, policies, and tariffs.
- Recommending Commission action on filings related to consumer issues.

Facts about Key Activities

Consumer Inquiries and Complaints

- We respond to an average of 2,000 contacts a month – telephone calls, e-mails, and letters.
- We open an average of 262 complaints a month.
- We note an average of 284 probable rule violations a month
- The common types of complaints are 1-disputed bills, 2-service disconnections, and 3-service quality.
- Three-quarters of complaints involve telecommunications companies.
- Other industries contribute to complaint volumes in the following way: electric -12 %, solid waste - 6 %, and natural gas - 4 %.

Facts about Key Activities

Education and Outreach

- We distribute an average of 100 publications each month, most in response to consumer contacts.
- Develop and maintain agency brochures, fact sheets and the consumer web pages.
- Develop, maintain, and enforce graphic standards to ensure consistent look and feel.
- Coordinate and participate in outreach events.
 - Consumer Protection Roundtable
 - Fairs & Home shows
 - Consumer protection workshops
- Assumed responsibility for this work in May 2005
- Next steps – increasing the visibility of the Commission.

Facts about Key Activities

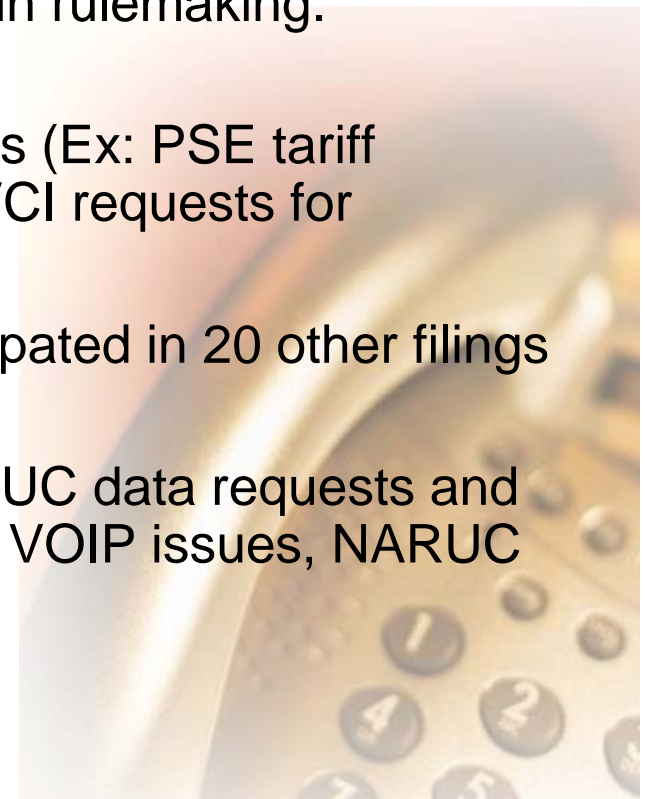
Public Involvement

- Review company-drafted customer notices before these are sent to customers.
- Receive, organize and convey public comments.
- Prepare and send public involvement letters.
- Educate public on commission processes and decisions.
- Staff public hearings.
- Developing new public involvement database.
- Assumed responsibility for public involvement in April 2004.
- Since that time we have managed public involvement in 80 filings and cases and received & responded to comments from 4,100 consumers.

Facts about Key Activities

Policy Work

- Two regulatory analysts in program
- Handle formal complaints and participate in rulemaking. (Ex: Western Village, Telco rulemaking.)
- Act as lead on filings that affect consumers (Ex: PSE tariff revisions, Qwest consumer bill of rights, VCI requests for exemptions.)
- Since 2004, have led 22 filings and participated in 20 other filings or cases
- Work with other State Commissions, NARUC data requests and NRRI requests. (Ex: winter heating rules, VOIP issues, NARUC resolutions.)

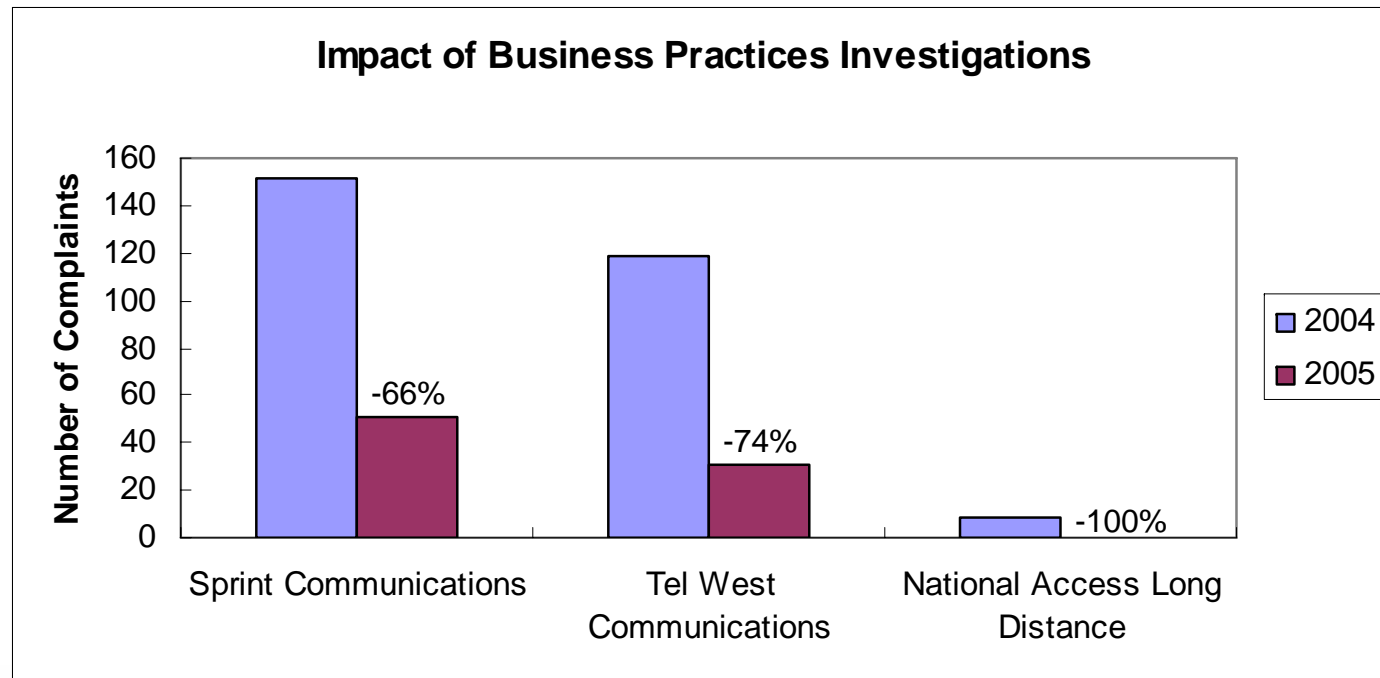


Agency Coordination

Business Practices

- High volume of complaints to Consumer Affairs leads to Business Practices investigations.

Examples:



Complaint Volume and FTE Usage

Year	FTE's in CA Program	FTE's Dedicated to Phones	Number of Complaints	Complaints per FTE	Avg. Days to Close Complaints	Activities
2001	15	8.30	5,254	633	46	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huge volume of Qwest network congestion and held orders complaints.
2002	14.5	7.55	5,027	665	40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large backlog of old complaints from 2001 and ongoing large volume of Qwest complaints.
2003	14.1	6.79	3,925	578	40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • July – Nancy Stanton retires, FTE left unfilled
2004	13.1	5.44	3,514	646	33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May – Public Involvement added to CA – no new FTE. • We are now using 1 FTE on these duties.
2005	15.1	5.19	2,607	502	31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April – Outreach added to CA – no new FTE. We are now using 1 FTE on outreach. • April – Web duties added to CA. We are now using .25 FTE on web duties. • June – Rhonda Huynh added to CA – graphic design.

Consumer Affairs Measures

1. Number of complaints & number of violations
2. Customer satisfaction survey
3. Overall customer satisfaction
4. Customer satisfaction/Avg. days to close
5. Average days to close complaints
6. Amount of \$\$ saved for consumers
7. Human resource management

Number of Complaints & Number of Violations

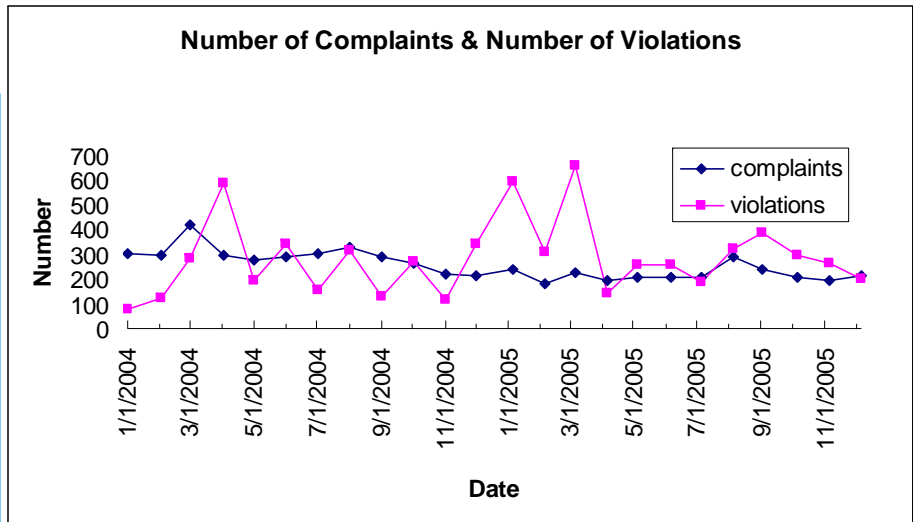
Measure: Number of complaints received by phone, e-mail or letters. Number of violations identified during review of complaints.

Strategic Goal: Take an action on every complaint at least once every two weeks. Identify any probable violations and have them corrected.

Data Source: Consumer Affairs database.

Discussion: The overall number of complaints has dropped from 2004 levels allowing for more thorough investigations and faster responses.

Increases in the number of violations identifies the need for company specific or industry wide Business Practices investigations.



Next Steps: Review expectations for taking actions on complaints. Use customer feedback to determine appropriate timeframes for resolution.

Work with Business Practices to identify patterns of increased types of complaints and determine if they are company specific or industry wide. Initiate investigations.

Customer Satisfaction Survey

After a complaint is closed, a 7-question survey, each with a yes or no answer, is sent to every other customer.

Q1-Were you treated with courtesy and respect?

Q2-Was the information you received from our staff clear and understandable?

Q3-Did you feel our staff was concerned about your problem and willing to assist you?

Q4-Did we return your calls in a timely manner while the complaint was under investigation?

Q5-Do you feel the amount of time it took before your complaint was closed was reasonable?

Q6-Even though the end result of your complaint may not have been as you had hoped, did you understand the outcome?

Q7-Would you contact the Commission again to resolve a question or problem?

Overall Customer Satisfaction

Measure: Overall customer satisfaction (avg. of 7 questions)

Strategic Goal: At least 85% of consumers report satisfaction with Consumer Affairs handling of their complaint.

Data Source: Customer service surveys sent to every other customer once complaint is closed.

Discussion: Staff have continued to exceed this goal.

2004/2005 – All Questions

Q -1 has consistently received the highest ratings (95%).

Q -6 has consistently received the lowest ratings (83%).



Next steps: Review goal to determine if it needs to be raised.

Continue to meet or exceed customer expectations.

Consider surveying regulated companies.

Customer Satisfaction/Avg. days to Close

Measure: Survey question # 5 – compared to average days to close complaint.

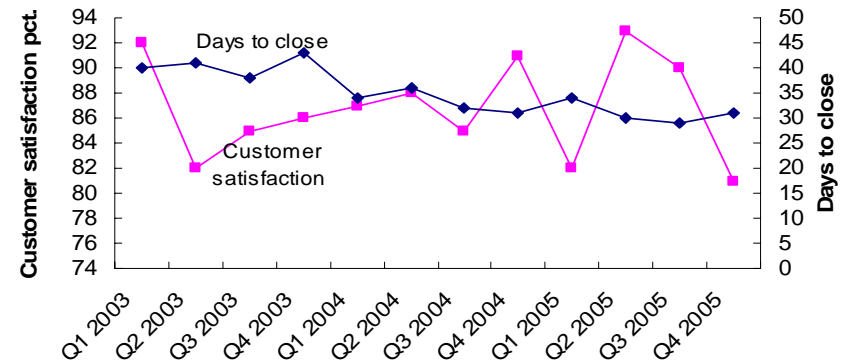
Strategic Goal: 1) Close 80% of complaints within 30 days. 2) At least 85% of consumers report satisfaction with Consumer Affairs handling of their complaint.

Data Source: Customer service surveys sent to every other customer once complaint is closed.

Discussion: Are we really just measuring how well we manage customer expectations?

The data on average days to close has been averaged over quarters for this presentation for comparison to customer satisfaction data that is collected quarterly.

Customer Satisfaction Compared to Average Days to Close Complaint



Next steps: Determine if goal of 30 days is appropriate.

Establish different expectations based on complexity.

Determine if survey needs to be changed to gather different information.

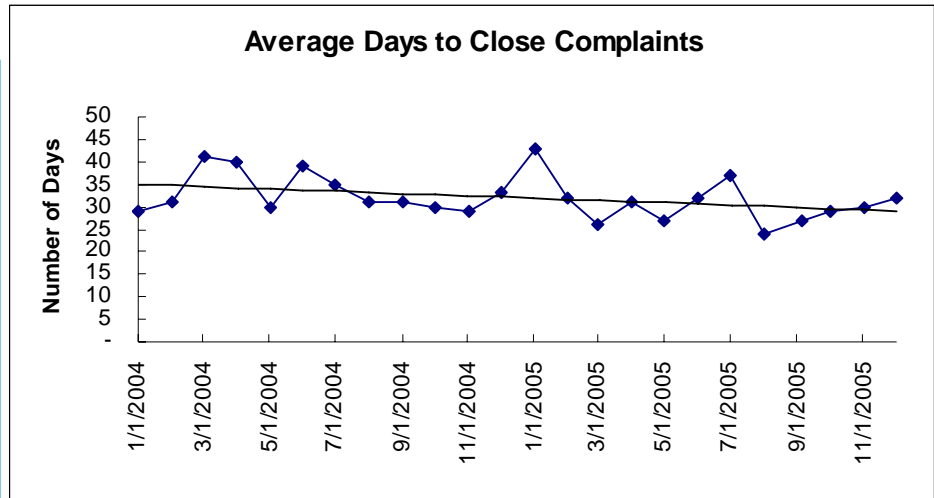
Determine if there is a correlation between satisfaction and average days to close?

Average Days to Close Complaints

Measure: Average number of days to close complaints.

Strategic goal: Close 80% of complaints within 30 days.

Data source: Consumer Affairs database.



Discussion: Over the past year, the average days to close complaints has dropped.

The average number of complaints also has dropped during the same timeframe. Staff are able to do more thorough investigations and have more accurate outcomes.

Next steps: Evaluate the goal to determine if change is needed.

Establish different expectations based on complexity.

Strive to close complaints faster, while maintaining thoroughness of investigations.

Amount of \$\$ Saved for Consumers

Measure: Total amount of dollars saved for consumers due to our involvement.

Strategic goal: Ensure consumers are being charged correct amounts and companies are following tariffs and price lists.

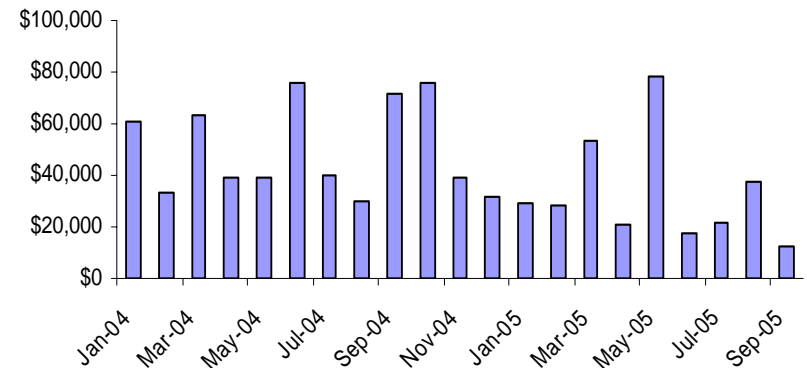
Data source: Consumer Affairs database.

Discussion: No consistent trend to consumer savings. One case may generate large savings while others may not.

Since Jan 2004, consumers have saved a total of **\$776,000**

Bottom line – the majority of these savings would not have happened without our intervention.

Amount of \$\$ saved for Consumers



Disposition of closed complaints:

64% - Positive outcome for consumers

40% Consumer upheld

24% Company upheld with arrangements

32% - Company upheld

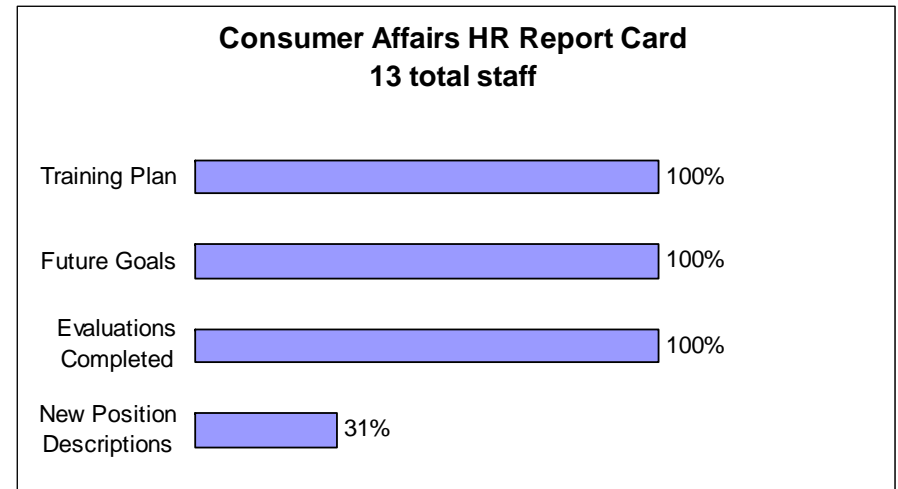
Next Steps: Continue to ensure compliance by companies which can lead to a reduction of inappropriate charges.

Human Resource Management

Measure: Up-to-date position descriptions. Evaluations of past performance. Current work goals tied to strategic plan. Current training plans including long-term development.

Strategic goal: 100%

Data source: Documentation in HR evaluation database and personnel & position records



Discussion: Due to Civil Service Reform, updated position description forms are required for all positions. This is a new requirement & accounts for the low percentage of completed position descriptions at this time (31%).

Next steps: Based on employee's anniversary date:

- Develop a position description including competencies identified through job analysis.
- Conduct timely & honest evaluation of past performance.
- Develop a work plan for the current evaluation period aligned to section, division & agency strategic plans.
- Develop relevant training plan including long-term development goals.